

NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of August 2nd, 2006 Meeting

1. **The Summary Record.** This summary record is provided for information and will be posted on the Task Force portion of the Coast Guard web site at www.navcen.uscg.gov/marcomms/ (click GMDSS, then GMDSS Task Force). The summary record is also distributed to all Task Force members to serve as a Newsletter summarizing GMDSS developments.

The GMDSS Task Force met at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington Virginia on August 2nd, 2006. The documents listed below were distributed and copies are available on request.

Coast Guard Press Release on Rescue 21 in AL, FL and LA
GAO Statement on Management of the Coast Guard's Rescue 21 Program
FCC Public Notice DA 06-1559 Approving Revised GMDSS Question Pools
IMO Status of Alternative Satellite Systems for GMDSS
IMO Circular MSC.1/Circ.1208 on Competence of GMDSS Operators
United Safe Boating Institute's Reprinted GMDSS Brochure
Coast Guard List of Accepted SSAS Systems and Security Plan Guidance
Coast Guard Realignment of NAVTEX Broadcast Schedules
Coast Guard Letter Responding to Task Force Recommendation that all Craft Offshore Carry VHF Radio or EPIRB/PLB

2. **Summary Record.** The Summary Record of the 11 May 2006 Task Force meeting was approved. A copy of the Summary Record is posted on the website.

3. **The Coast Guard Reports:**

a. Upgrade of MF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A2. Russ Levin reported that the shore facilities still needed antenna upgrades and that the cost of providing them would extend the program for several years. Russ also reported that the Coast Guard plan to contract for a market survey of the users of their various HF broadcasting services (voice, narrow band direct printing, and fax) was ready to be issued. The Coast Guard is also planning an automated test facility for HF DSC test calls which would answer on 4 MHz only. This project is in response to a determination that 75-80% of the DSC calls received were for test purposes.

b. Status Report on Rescue 21 – DSC for Sea Area A1. LTJG Travis Gracewski, the new Public Affairs Officer for the Rescue 21 VHF-DSC Acquisition Project, reported on the status of the project. A recent Press Release was distributed announcing activation of a new stretch of coastline in the Gulf of Mexico including Alabama, Mississippi and north Florida. Work is progressing in the Pacific Northwest with early activation expected in the Seattle – Port Angeles region by the end of 2006. Also distributed was a highly critical report by the General Accounting Office (GAO) citing the Coast Guard's "failure to follow a rigorous requirements management process"

and the Contractor's "underestimating the time required to complete key tasks."

c. Report by the Chief, Office of Boating Safety. Jeff Hoedt, Chief of the Coast Guard's Office of Boating Safety, was introduced to the Task Force and provided a review of the scope of his Office's responsibility and responded to questions. His Office administers the Boating Safety Grants funded from marine fuel taxes, the program which made possible the VHF-DSC Tutorial strongly endorsed by the Task Force (see para 7 below). The Boating Safety Office also manages the Standards Oversight system which certifies recreational boats as to capacity and sea worthiness including a recall program when needed. Another Division of the office handles Regulatory and Legislative affairs. In this regard, Jeff's Office was responsible for responding to the Task Force Letter recommending that the Coast Guard seek legislative authority to require all vessels offshore to carry VHF radio on an EPIRB. The response was distributed at the meeting and will be placed on the website. The letter basically indicates that the Coast Guard cannot "accept or decline the Task Force recommendations" at this time without more analysis and data to support a legislative initiative.

d. Current Status of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). Jorge Arroyo provided an update on AIS developments including the following highlights:

(1) The Federal Government Unified Regulatory Agenda published 24 April 2006 in the Federal Register announced plans for a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) vice an Interim Rule to expand AIS carriage requirements beyond VTS areas. The NPRM would extend AIS carriage to self propelled vessels of 65 feet and above, tugs of 26 feet and above with over 600 horsepower, fishing vessels, dredges, vessels carrying hazardous cargos, high speed passenger vessels and those carrying more than 50 passengers, and any other commercial vessels 65 feet or more - about 17,000 vessels altogether. Release of the NPRM was expected in October 2006 but is now looking more like January 2007.

(2) Class B AIS will be considered for non-SOLAS vessels but FCC Type Certification procedures still pend and will be required for the Class B AIS devices as well as USCG Type Approval. The IEC approved the specification for Class B AIS on 20 March 2006 and two devices are now being tested. The price range is presently \$800-1500.

(3) With respect to Electronic Chart Systems (ECS), The International Electro-technical Committee (IEC) should complete work on a proposed minimum standard soon. Congress has imposed a deadline of 1 January 2007 for the Coast Guard to define requirements for electronic chart systems. Congress expects that the Coast Guard requirements will also call for a display capability for AIS information since a display is needed for the mariner to realize the improved safety benefits of AIS.

e. IMO Initiative for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT). Bob Markle, as Chairman of the LRIT Correspondence Group at COMSAR, summarized progress on this project at the meeting. Most technical issues had been resolved and were

reported at the last meeting. Among the remaining issues, a major one relates to designation of an International Coordinator to receive data collected by national entities. IMISO has been suggested for this role but would have to expand significantly and some administrations, including the U.S., oppose this. A critical meeting in September will address this issue. A question was raised regarding the future of the AMVER voluntary vessel tracking system which plans to remain operational since it will likely be declared the national LRIT data collection agency for U.S. vessels. In similar fashion, it is expected that nations which do not want to establish their own collection agency may wish to designate AMVER for this function which is likely to be much more cost effective than having each administration establish its own facility. The Task Force thanked Bob for his expert leadership as Chairman of the Correspondence Group which was instrumental in getting the LRIT provisions adopted by the COMSAR Subcommittee in a timely fashion.

f. Coast Guard Review of Ship Security Alerting System (SSAS)

Requirements. Dave Appel outlined the basic requirements for the SSAS and distributed a Coast Guard document listing 14 systems which have been accepted for U.S. flag vessels. The program requires designation of both a Ship Security Officer and a Company Security Officer, the latter being charged with notification of the Coast Guard within 5 minutes of receiving an SSAS alert from a company ship. Dave also distributed an outline to assist in writing the required SSAS Annex to the Vessel Security Plan which must be approved by the Coast Guard.

g. Realignment of NAVTEX Broadcast Schedule. Russ Levin introduced a document which outlined a revised schedule for NAVTEX Broadcasts which have been routinely exceeding their time slots. Since weather forecasts account for a high percentage of the time used, in good weather the schedule will only include the weather forecast in every other broadcast.

4. The FCC Reports: Ghassan Khalek reported for the FCC. The following are highlights of his report.

a. Report and Order on Frequency Designation for AIS. Ghassan Khalek was pleased to announce the release of Report and Order 06-108 on 20 July 2006 resolving the pending issues on designation of channels for AIS communication in the U.S. and resolution of this matter was greeted warmly by the Task Force. The Commission designated VHF channels 87B and 88B for AIS use and in so doing, dismissed objections by MarITEL. The Commission also raised further issues to be resolved in a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. Responses to the NPRM are due in 30 days from publication of the Notice in the Federal Register. As this Newsletter went to press on August 23rd, the Report and Order had not yet been published in the Federal Register.

- 1) Whether the AIS designations should be nationwide? (they were initially limited to areas of navigable water)
- 2) Who should be permitted to operate AIS Base Stations and for what purpose?
- 3) Whether the FCC should develop Rules for Certification of Class B AIS?

b. Status of Part 80 Continuing Rule Making Proceedings. There has been no change since the last meeting with regard to the numerous outstanding items which are pending completion.

c. Implementation of new GMDSS Question Pools. The FCC released Public Notice DA 06-1559 on 1 August 2006 approving the use of the newly updated Question Pools for GMDSS examinations. This is the final implementing action by the FCC. The Coast Guard's National Maritime Center has not yet taken the expected parallel action.

d. National MMSI Policy Review. This issue originated with a Task Force Petition to the FCC to permit recreational vessel operators to retain MMSI numbers already issued by BOATUS or Sea Tow when applying for a Station License. The FCC has not responded officially to the Petition but is working with a Task Force ad hoc group looking at other national issues related to MMSI policy and procedures. The ad hoc group has had two meetings in Washington and has scheduled a third meeting for 21 September at the Coast Guard's Operations System Center (OSC) in Martinsburg West Virginia. Other parties desiring to join the ad hoc group should contact Jack Fuechsel.

e. Report on IMO/ITU Joint Panel of Experts. Dante Ibarra reported that there were several maritime issues on the agenda for the next ITU World Administrative Radio Conference which prompted the joint meeting of experts held in London in July. Among the pertinent agenda items are the following:

1) Agenda Item 113 – HF Communications. The effort will be to update appendix 17 (hopefully avoiding loss of maritime spectrum to other services) and accommodate digital email as a possible replacement for Narrow Band Direct Printing (NBPD) which is rarely used.

2) Agenda Item 114 – GMDSS Modernization. There are several issues pending such as protection of AIS and DSC channel 70; satellite detection of AIS; need for a 3rd AIS channel; and expansion of COSPAS-SARSAT functionality.

3) Agenda Item 116 – Exhaustion of MMSI Numbers. With the expanded use of MMSI numbers for AIS, new formats for MMSI number assignment are being devised to avoid running out of numbers.

5. The GMDSS Modernization Initiative. RADM Ed Gilbert reported on the status of the U.S. initiative to qualify satellite providers other than Inmarsat to provide GMDSS services. The outcome of the February COMSAR meeting was not encouraging but a U.S. proposal to the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) in May received agreement to work toward a revision of the SOLAS Convention to replace the term "Inmarsat" with the generic phrase "Recognized Mobile Satellite Service Provider". It is hoped that the next MSC meeting in December will make further progress in removing an allowing alternatives to an oversight role by the International Mobile Satellite Organization (IMSO).

6. **The RTCM Report:** RTCM President Bob Markle reminded members that the 2007 RTCM Assembly will be in St. Petersburg Beach, Florida May 6-12.

7. **The Recreational Vessel Group Report:** Elaine Dickinson led the discussion for the Recreational Vessel Group which included the following highlights:

a. DSC Tutorial: The Task Force has been following the development of a DSC tutorial by the BOAT U.S. Foundation under a Coast Guard grant. The program is being developed by Chuck Husick and is virtually ready for release following approval by the Coast Guard sponsors. A Press Release from the BOATUS Foundation will announce its availability which is expected by early September. It will probably be posted on the website www.boatus.com/mmsi.

b. Appeal to Boat Operators to Implement VHF-DSC. As reported at the January meeting, it appears that a significant number of the VHF radios in use have a Digital Selective Calling (DSC) capability but the vast majority of these have not yet applied for an MMSI number which is needed to implement the automated distress alerting feature of DSC. The Task Force decided that a campaign should be undertaken to explain the benefits of using DSC without waiting for the Coast Guard to complete Rescue 21 (now scheduled for 2011 or later). The Coast Guard is now publicizing new coverage areas under the Rescue 21 Program as they come on line and one of the principal benefits of Rescue 21 is the new full time watch on the DSC calling and distress channel, #70. Boat operators are urged to register for an MMSI number with BOATUS or Sea Tow and connect the DSC Radio to a GPS receiver to ensure that an accurate position is automatically transmitted along with the distress alert.

c. United Safe Boating Institute GMDSS Brochure Updated. Copies of a reprinted GMDSS Brochure were distributed by the Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety. Modest quantities may be requested from Mr. Joeseeph Carro, 202-267-1263, or by email to jcarro@comdt.uscg.mil.

d. USPS Recreational Boat Operator Certification Program. Gene Danko of the United States Power Squadrons reported that they are working on a draft document for recreational boat operator certification. The program would use USPS internal classroom work, on-the-water skills assessments and proof of competence from other knowledgeable sources (e.g., sailing schools) to rate members according to a four-tiered ranking, from inland to offshore approved. This program is directed at members internal to USPS but may serve as a mode for a standardized certification program. The proposal will be presented within USPS in August and they will update the Task Force at the next scheduled meeting.

8. **The Report of the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group:** The only issue from this Group which had been planned for discussion relates to the new Simplified Voyage Data Recorder (S-VDR). Since no briefing on this topic was available for this meeting, it will be rescheduled for the October meeting.

Key to cognizant groups:

- (TF) Task Force
- (CV) Commercial Vessel Task Group
- (RV) Recreational Vessel Task Group

(SA) Service Agents and Manufacturers Task Group
(TR) Training Task Group

Please refer questions and proposals to Captain Jack Fuechsel at 703-527-0484 or gmdss@comcast.net (note change in phone and further change to email beyond that reported in earlier Newsletters). If you have an Internet server with spam filters, please authorize receipt of messages from gmdss@comcast.net

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